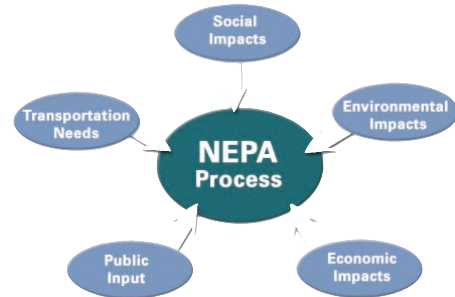


Where Do I Fit In?



Social, environmental and economic impacts balanced with transportation needs and public input help shape the decisions and outcomes under NEPA.

Public Agency Input Group

The Public Agency Input Group is made up of state and federal regulatory agencies. Its function is to identify issues, concerns and regulations related to the Idaho 55 - Smiths Ferry to Round Valley project. The group also plays an important role in deciding which options should be carried forward and in selecting the preferred alternative.

Idaho 55 - Smiths Ferry to Round Valley Team

The Idaho 55 - Smiths Ferry to Round Valley Team is a group of citizens and local officials that represent the interests and concerns of environmental associations, recreational groups, businesses, neighborhoods, and property owners that could be affected by the Idaho 55 - Smiths Ferry to Round Valley project.

The team has helped identify issues, brainstorm options and recommend options to be evaluated in the Environmental Impact Statement. It is made up of a cross-section of interested citizens from various social and economic groups within the project area.

General Public

The public has been invited to participate in the Idaho 55 - Smiths Ferry to Round Valley workshops. Participants at the first workshop helped the transportation department identify project-related issues and developed options. During the second workshop, the public helped determine which options should be carried forward for further study. During the third workshop, the public will be asked to recommend their desired option.

Questions and Answers

Will the option recommended by the public be the one that is selected?

Possibly, but not necessarily. Many factors including environmental, cultural, social-economic impacts, as well as public opinion will be assessed when selecting the preferred alternative.

What happens at the state and federal agency meetings? Is the public allowed to attend these meetings?

These meetings are designed to allow state and federal regulatory agencies the opportunity to provide input concerning their specific areas of expertise.

The public may attend these meetings as observers and are welcome to submit written comments about the meetings to the transportation department. Public comments are not taken at the meetings. The public may obtain copies of the meeting's minutes.

Public workshops and hearings are designed to allow the public to provide their input about the project to the transportation department. These workshops and hearings are well publicized through newspaper advertisements and notifications are mailed to individuals on the project mailing list.

For more information contact:

Idaho Transportation Department
Public Involvement Coordinator
Stephanie Zabala
(208) 334-4444

Idaho Transportation Department
Project Manager
Lisa Applebee
(208) 334-8919

HDR Engineering, Inc.
Project Manager
Louis Krug
(208) 342-3779



Workgroup participants discuss potential options during the Round 2 public meeting.

Comments In Writing

If you would like to submit comments in writing, you may mail them to:

Idaho Transportation Department
Public Involvement Coordinator
P.O. BOX 7129
Boise, ID 83707-1129



Idaho Transportation Department
P. O. Box 7129
Boise, ID 83707-1129

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Idaho 55 - Smiths Ferry to Round Valley

Alignment Study



Project Background

The Idaho Transportation Department values your opinion. That's why you are being asked to participate in the Idaho 55 - Smiths Ferry to Round Valley Alignment Study. The purpose of the study is to recommend an option that will improve safety, decrease congestion, address environmental and cultural concerns, and accommodate for the future.

The Idaho 55 - Smiths Ferry to Round Valley Alignment Study began in late 1999. The study has three essential elements - environmental studies, engineering evaluations and public involvement. Public input has helped the transportation department identify issues, develop options and evaluate alternatives. Initially, multiple options were identified including a "no-build" option. Project officials have now narrowed the list of alternatives that will be studied in more detail (alternatives are shown on Page 2).

The public has been asked to participate throughout the study. Two rounds of meetings have been held to date and another round will be held later this year. State and federal agencies have also been involved in the process to ensure regulatory issues are adequately addressed.

The following briefly outlines the project's public involvement activities:

- Round 1: These meetings were held in February and March of 2000. Issues and options were identified through workgroups. Public generated comments and issues were then used to develop, evaluate and compare options.
- Round 2: In June of 2000, attendees of the second public workshop were asked to recommend the options that should receive further evaluation. Based on an analysis of workgroup results and the submission of written comments, it was determined that four options should be carried forward for further study. These options were then presented and discussed at two meetings with state and federal agencies. To broaden the base of options to be evaluated, state and federal agency personnel recommended additional options also receive further study (options are shown on Page 2).
- Round 3: A third workshop will be held later this year. The workshop's focus will be to identify the public's desired option. Transportation department officials and the consultant team will present environmental and engineering information to assist the attendees in their evaluation. Workshop attendees will discuss the project and make their recommendations. The public's recommendation(s) balanced with engineering and environmental analyses will then be included in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (see Page 3 for more information on the EIS).

Study Goals

Identify issues

Identify regulatory barriers

Brainstorm options

Select a desired option

Summer 2001



Round 2 Results

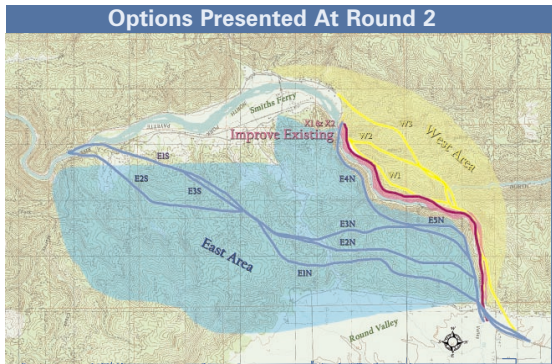


figure 1

Public Recommended Options

Based on an analysis of workshop results and the submission of written comments, it was determined the public recommended the following options to be carried forward for further study (see figure 1):

- X2
- E2S - E3N
- W1

Agency Recommended Options Meeting 2a

To broaden the base of options to be evaluated, state and federal agency personnel recommended during their first Round 2 public agency meeting that the following options also receive further study (see figure 1):

- X1
- E1N
- E1S
- E2N
- E2S
- W3

Options Carried Forward for Further Study and Environmental Impact Statement Evaluation

Environmental and engineering evaluations of the options listed above began last summer. Initial results were presented to the state and federal agencies during the second Round 2 public agency meeting. At this meeting the agencies agreed to drop E1N due to public opposition, aesthetic impacts and impacts to water resources. They also dropped W1 because of its potential impacts to the Payette River and the Rainbow Bridge.



figure 2

Environmental Concerns

How Does the National Environmental Policy Act affect the Idaho 55 - Smiths Ferry to Round Valley Project?



National Environmental Policy Act

The National Environmental Policy Act was signed into law in 1969. The Act is considered to be the basic “national charter” for protection of the environment and has three major goals: it sets national environmental policy; it establishes a basis for Environmental Impact Statements; and it created the Council on Environmental Quality.

NEPA requires the examination of potential impacts to social and environmental resources when considering the approval of a proposed transportation project. NEPA requires that impacts on the human and natural resources be balanced with the public’s need for a safe and efficient transportation system.

Environmental Impact Statements

NEPA requires the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement for any project that is likely to have significant affects. EISs are required for less than 5 percent of Federal Highways Administration projects, but require the most effort, time and money to complete. Because of the potential for significant environmental impacts, an EIS must be prepared

for the Idaho 55 - Smiths Ferry to Round Valley project.

The EIS process is carried out in three phases. The first phase is the scoping phase, which identifies issues and notifies the public and federal, state and local agencies that an EIS will be prepared for a specific project. The second and third phases prepare a draft EIS and, following public review, a final EIS. Both are full disclosure documents that provide a detailed description of the proposed project, the existing environment and an analysis of the anticipated benefits and effects of all reasonable alternatives. In the draft EIS stage, all reasonable alternatives should be discussed and compared equally. The final EIS must identify and describe the “preferred” alternative and the reason for the decision. The no-build alternative is always included.

Merger Process

The Merger Process is designed to improve the efficiency of the NEPA process. It is called the Merger Process because it actually merges the NEPA process with the process for acquiring a Section 404 permit required by the Clean Water Act. Section 404 permits are required for any project that would impact wetlands. Both processes involve studying alternatives and environmental impacts, and balancing the results of those studies against the need for a project. The Section 404 permit is issued by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, but many federal and state agencies are often involved in the process including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Idaho Division of Environmental Quality, and the Idaho Department of Water Resources. The Merger Process consists of interagency meetings designed to obtain input from natural resource experts in order to avoid or minimize impacts to the natural environment.

The Merger Process has three basic steps. Decisions are reached following each step and these are referred to as concurrence points:

Step No. 1. Notify agencies and the public that the process has begun for a specific project. Public meetings may be held to identify interests, to help identify potential alternatives, and to gather comments.

Concurrence Point No. 1. Establish the Purpose and Need for the project and identify an initial range of alternatives for consideration. This step has been completed.

Step No. 2. Perform engineering and environmental evaluation of initial alternatives. Evaluate and compare alternatives. Additional public meetings may be held to obtain comments from the public.

Concurrence Point No. 2. Select alternatives that will be carried forward for detailed study in the EIS. This step has been completed.

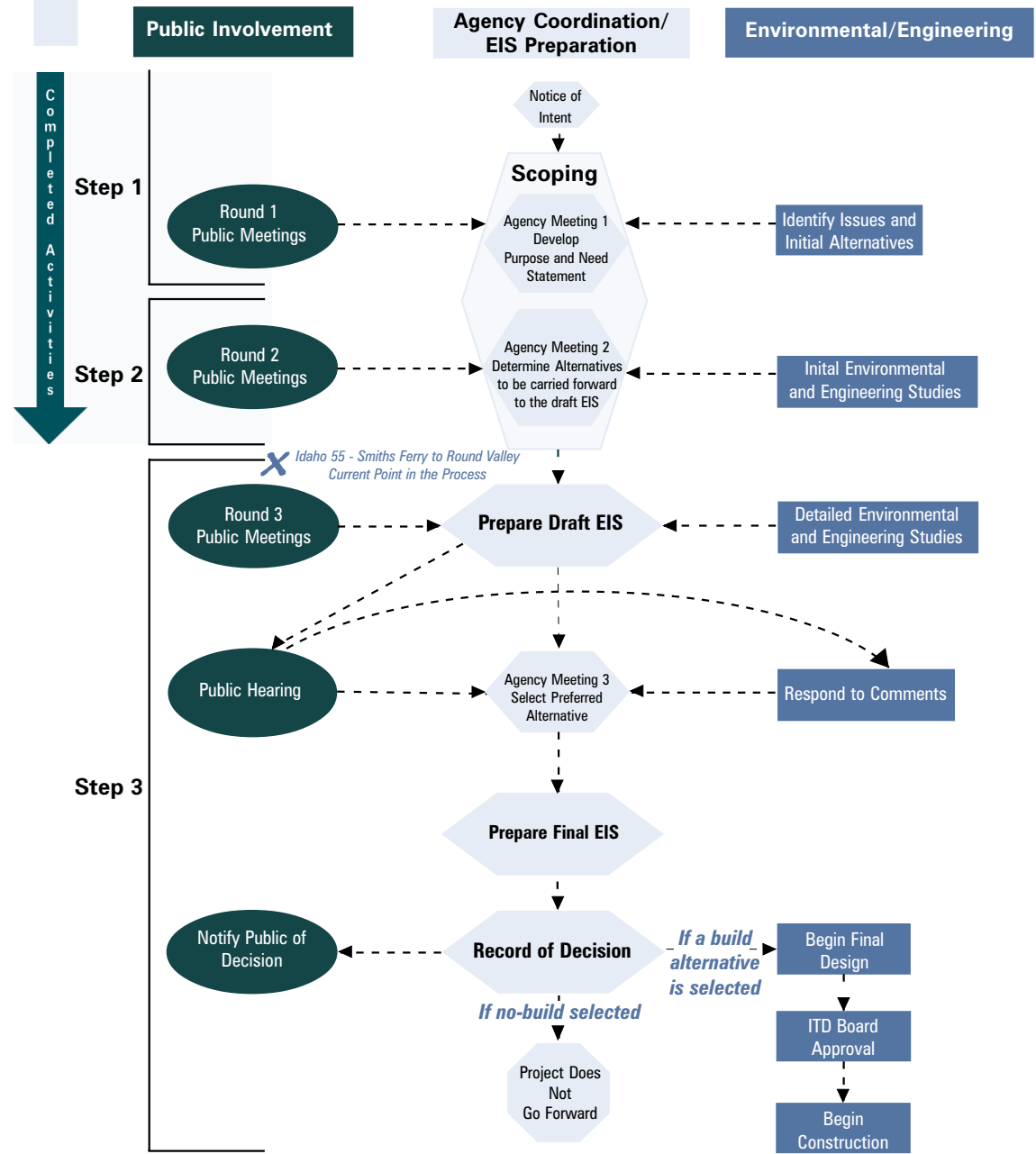
Step No. 3. Prepare draft EIS, hold public hearing and prepare final EIS. This step is currently underway.

Concurrence Point No. 3. Evaluate alternatives and select the preferred alternative. An agency meeting will be held after the public hearing and before the EIS is completed

The chart on the next page illustrates the process. For more information on NEPA and EIS go to www.fhwa.dot.gov.

The Process

The NEPA/Section 404 Merger Process



Glossary

Notice of Intent - The Notice of Intent is prepared for publication in the *Federal Register*, a daily legal newspaper that contains federal agency regulations. The Notice of Intent announces to the public and interested agencies that a project is being developed and that an EIS will be prepared.

Scoping - The formal coordination process required by the NEPA process to assist in determining the scope of the project and the major issues related to the proposed action.

Record of Decision - The Record of Decision is issued by the Federal Highway Administration. It allows an agency, like the transportation department, to proceed to final design and construction.